

Advanced Placement® Summer Institute: A Survey of Florida AP® Teachers

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Introduction

The Florida Partnership

The Florida Partnership, forged by the Department of Education and the College Board, serves to overcome the challenges facing educators and students in Florida. The partnership was created in 1999, with work beginning in early 2000. Through the Florida Partnership, workshops, conferences, and institutes are being offered to help educators throughout the state expand their students' academic achievements, and to help more students make a successful transition to college. Scholarships are available via an application process, and provide a \$250 stipend if a teacher attends all five days of AP® Summer Institute training (\$500 if they are attending outside of the district in which they teach).

AP® Summer Institute

Advanced Placement Program® Summer Institute (APSI) courses provide teachers with an overview of the curriculum, structure, and content of specific AP courses. Attention is devoted not only to the development of curriculum but also to teaching strategies and the relationship of the course to the AP Examination. The AP Summer Institutes offer new and experienced teachers a rich professional development opportunity.

During the summers of 2006 and 2007, 168 institutes were held for new and experienced AP teachers in the state of Florida at nine institutions of higher education. In 2006, 79 were held, and there were 89 held in 2007.

APSI Evaluation Survey

In the spring of 2008, evaluation researchers in the Research and Development department of the College Board developed a survey to solicit feedback on participants' impressions of the APSIs offered in Florida, as well as changes they made on their AP curriculum and exam preparation as a direct result of attending the institute(s).

If respondents indicated that they were currently practicing AP teachers, they were directed through four major sections: (1) teaching and education background; (2) APSI impressions and feedback; (3) AP and non-AP (if applicable) program changes; and (4) AP culture in the teacher's school. The survey was administered electronically, with invitations to participate delivered to e-mail addresses collected from the APSI registration and attendance records.

Survey Respondents

Invitation e-mails were sent to a total of 1,981 valid and unique e-mail addresses. A total of 813 (41.0 percent) responses were collected, with 634 respondents who were currently teaching at least one AP course, had attended at least one APSI in the last two years, and had completed at least one-third of the survey.

District Representation

Forty-four (65.7 percent) of Florida's 67 public school districts were represented by those respondents who completed the survey, along with one teacher from a Florida State University school (FSUS). The district with the largest representation was Duval County, with 95 AP teachers participat-

ing in this study, followed by Orange County ($n = 56$) and Miami-Dade ($n = 44$).

Grade Levels

A majority of the respondents (73.7 percent, $n = 467$) reported that they teach more than one grade level, with most teaching two levels (29.5 percent, $n = 187$). Just over a quarter of the teachers (26.3 percent, $n = 167$) reported teaching only one grade. The two most common grade levels are eleventh and twelfth grades, with 61.2 percent of teachers ($n = 388$) indicating that they teach both, and some teaching additional grade levels. The grade level most commonly taught was eleventh grade, with 78.39 percent of teachers ($n = 497$), followed by twelfth grade, with 75.4 percent of teachers ($n = 478$); tenth grade, with 53.2 percent of teachers ($n = 337$); and ninth grade, with 33.8 percent of teachers ($n = 214$). Less than two percent of teachers reported teaching grade levels below ninth grade.

Teaching Experience

Over half of the participating teachers (56.0 percent, $n = 355$) have been teaching overall for 10 years or more. The mean response was 14.8 years and the median was 11 years, with only 14.7 percent ($n = 93$) teaching a total of three years or less.

The mean Advanced Placement® teaching experience of the respondents was 4.1 years. AP teaching experience has been broken down into three categories for research comparison purposes. If a teacher indicated that he or she began teaching AP in 2006 or later, he or she was classified as “new.” If the teacher began sometime between 2003 and 2005, he or she was classified as “fairly experienced.” If the teacher began teaching AP before 2003, he or she was considered “experienced.” Over half of the teachers (56.3 percent, $n = 357$) participating in this study were classified as “new,” with 21.9 percent ($n = 139$) classified as “fairly experienced,” and 21.8 percent ($n = 138$) classified as “experienced.” Ten teachers responded that they began teaching AP in 2008, so they have not yet completed their first full year of Advanced Placement teaching.

Certification and Education Levels

Currently, Florida teachers can hold two different types of teaching certificates: professional and temporary. The temporary certificate is valid for three years and nonrenewable, and requires a bachelor’s degree and mastery of a particular subject. The professional certificate is a renewable five-year

license that requires mastery of general knowledge and professional preparation and education competence, in addition to the bachelor’s degree and demonstrated mastery of a subject area (source: www.fldoe.org/edcert/cert_types.asp). Approximately 94.3 percent of teachers participating in this survey hold a professional certification, while 5.7 percent hold temporary licensure.

Table 1 shows the education levels of the participants. Teachers can appear in more than one category, depending on their highest education level completed. Most respondents hold bachelor’s degrees in subjects other than education. It should be noted that some only reported the highest level of education, as opposed to all degrees attained.

Table 1. Respondents’ Current Levels of Education

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Bachelor’s degree in education	213	33.6
Bachelor’s degree in another subject area	331	52.2
Master’s degree in education	179	28.2
Master’s degree in another subject area	134	21.1
Education specialist	6	0.9
Ed.D. or Ph.D. in education	5	0.8
Ph.D. in another area	9	1.4
Some graduate work	7	1.1
Other	17	2.7

Subject Areas

Teachers were asked if they are currently teaching AP courses that are in or out of their subject area. Most (97.9 percent, $n = 621$) indicated that all of their AP courses are within their subject area specialty, and an additional seven (1.1 percent) indicated that they are teaching both in and out of their subject area. Only six teachers (0.9 percent) reported teaching only AP courses outside of their specialty subject area(s).

The most common AP subject taught by survey respondents was English Language and Composition (14.0 percent, $n = 89$), followed by English Literature and Composition (10.3 percent, $n = 65$), World History (7.9 percent, $n = 50$), Calculus AB (7.9 percent, $n = 50$), U.S. History (7.3 percent, $n = 46$), U.S. Government and Politics (6.8 percent, $n = 43$), Human Geography (6.5 percent, $n = 41$), Psychology (5.8 percent, $n = 37$), Spanish Language (5.5 percent, $n = 35$), Statistics (4.9 percent, $n = 31$), and Biology (4.9 percent, $n = 31$).

APSI Attendance

Over half of the APSI-attending AP teachers (51.3 percent, $n = 325$) who participated in the survey had attended an institute in the summer of 2007, and 27.3 percent ($n = 173$) attended in the summer of 2006. Approximately one-fifth of participants (21.5 percent, $n = 136$) had attended an APSI both summers.

Funding

The evaluation survey asked respondents to indicate their source of funding for attending the APSI. Most teachers received scholarship funding through the Florida Partnership, with 77.3 percent ($n = 490$) reporting that the partnership funded all APSIs attended, and an additional 13.1 percent ($n = 83$) reporting that the partnership funded some APSIs attended, but not all. Other sources included individual schools (3.2 percent, $n = 20$), district education departments (1.7 percent, $n = 11$), and teachers' personal out-of-pocket expense (0.8 percent, $n = 5$).

APSI Impressions

Ten questions on the survey focused on general workshop impressions of the APSI. These items were of the Likert type, with a 1–5 rating scale where “1” equals “strongly disagree” and “5” equals “strongly agree.” Overall means for the 10 items are listed in Table 2.

The item with the highest average level of agreement was “I would recommend [the APSI] to a new AP teacher,” which had an average response of 4.59, with 75.8 percent ($n = 475$) of those who responded indicating strong agreement and an additional 16.9 percent ($n = 106$) indicating agreement. Further analyses were conducted to determine potential differences in impressions and experiences between teachers of varying experience levels. Mean responses to the same 10 APSI impressions questions for each of the three experience levels (new, fairly experienced, and experienced) are listed in Table 3.

Although most APSI listings indicated appropriate experience levels, some participants attended workshops that were targeted at teachers with different backgrounds.

Table 2. Mean Responses for APSI Impressions Items

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>n</i>
I gained new content knowledge.	4.2	1.09	627
I gained new pedagogical knowledge.	4.2	1.03	626
I was given adequate opportunity to network with other teachers like me.	4.3	1.02	624
I enjoyed attending the APSI.	4.4	1.01	627
I would recommend it to a new AP teacher.	4.6	0.93	627
I would recommend it to an experienced AP teacher.	4.2	1.12	625
I was satisfied with the scope and coverage of material.	4.2	1.13	624
The material covered in the APSI is relevant to my needs as an AP teacher.	4.3	1.06	623
The APSI helped me increase academic rigor in the AP classroom.	4.2	1.12	626
I am currently using the strategies and tools presented in the APSI in my AP classroom.	4.2	1.03	626

Table 3. Mean Responses by AP Experience Level

	<i>New</i>	<i>Fairly Experienced</i>	<i>Experienced</i>
I gained new content knowledge.	4.2	4.1	4.3
I gained new pedagogical knowledge.	4.1	4.2	4.2
I was given adequate opportunity to network with other teachers like me.	4.2	4.3	4.4
I enjoyed attending the APSI.	4.4	4.3	4.5
I would recommend it to a new AP teacher.	4.6	4.6	4.7
I would recommend it to an experienced AP teacher.	4.2	4.1	4.5
I was satisfied with the scope and coverage of material.	4.1	4.2	4.3
The material covered in the APSI is relevant to my needs as an AP teacher.	4.3	4.3	4.4
The APSI helped me increase academic rigor in the AP classroom.	4.1	4.1	4.3
I am currently using the strategies and tools presented in the APSI in my AP classroom.	4.2	4.3	4.3

Note: Standard deviations ranged from 0.94 to 1.15 for new teachers, from 1.00 to 1.22 for fairly experienced teachers, and from 0.80 to 1.04 for experienced teachers.

Several new teachers reported discomfort with attending the same APSI as experienced teachers, because the content covered may have been too advanced for a new teacher's needs. Several experienced teachers noted the same issue, reporting that the material needed to be more advanced to properly help them improve their AP teaching. These comments support the notion that APSIs should be set up for specific levels of experience, and teachers are encouraged to attend workshops targeted at their level. Regardless, many teachers reported benefits of networking and sharing information with teachers who were not only on their same level but also more experienced, and they indicated that they were still in touch with each other as the academic year progressed, sharing ideas and materials and giving advice and support. Many also indicated that they were still in touch with their APSI instructor(s), and have received valuable information and materials for improved AP instruction.

All three groups agreed most strongly with the statement, "I would recommend [the APSI] to a new AP teacher." Significant differences in response among the three groups were explored using a series of one-way ANOVAs with a Bonferroni correction to account for an inflated Type I error rate. No statistically significant differences (at the 0.05 alpha level) among the three groups were found. The largest difference was for the statement, "I would recommend [the APSI] to an experienced AP teacher." In this instance, experienced AP teachers responded more strongly in agreement than did the new and fairly experienced teachers, with 63.2 percent ($n = 89$) responding in strong agreement, as opposed to 50.7 percent ($n = 178$) and 53.6 percent ($n = 74$) of the new and fairly experienced teachers, respectively.

Summary of APSI Impressions

Overall, teachers reported very positive experiences with the APSI. Many respondents enjoyed the opportunity to share ideas with other teachers and gain further insights into the AP Exam (in terms of expectations and scoring) and the materials provided. New teachers reported feeling more comfortable with teaching an AP course for the first time, and said that the APSI gave them the information and materials they needed to develop a proper syllabus and prepare their students adequately for the AP Exam. No significant differences were found between new and experienced teachers, but many requested that separate workshops continue to be developed for differing experience levels so that participants could obtain the most relevant information possible. Many Florida Partnership teachers reported that

they received funding support, without which they would have been unable to attend the APSI, and several specifically requested that these funding opportunities continue.

Classroom Change Due to APSI

Teachers were asked the extent to which they changed various aspects of their AP and non-AP (if applicable) courses due to the APSI. At least 585 teachers rated the items regarding the extent of change in the AP classroom, and 243 left optional comments regarding their changes. Of the 634 AP teachers participating in this survey, 88.5 percent ($n = 561$) indicated that they also teach non-AP courses. These teachers were then directed to a section to rate the extent of change on various aspects of the non-AP courses as a result of attending the APSI. In addition, 131 left optional comments further explaining their changes. This section discusses the ratings and responses.

Change in the AP Classroom

Table 4 shows both the average response and the most common response (mode) for the items pertaining to extent of change in teaching AP courses. A score of 1 corresponds with "not at all," a 3 is "somewhat," and a 5 is "to a great extent." Teachers were given the option "not applicable" if they had never taught the course before attending the APSI, and thus would not have had any changes to report. These responses were counted as missing and were not used in the calculation of the mean scores.

Table 4. Extent of Change in AP Classrooms

To what extent did you change your...	Mean	Mode ¹
curriculum content	3.7	5
content sequence	3.3	3
content emphases or priorities	3.9	5
classroom activities	3.7	5
homework expectations	3.3	5
grading standards	3.2	4
curriculum plans for AP Exam preparation	3.9	5

1. Mode is included here to illustrate the skewed distribution of responses.

Teachers reported the most change in how they prepare their students for the AP Exam(s) after participating in the APSI. The area showing the least amount of change was grading standards. Many teachers indicated having a great amount of respect for the Advanced Placement Program, and therefore already had higher standards for AP students.

Teachers reported the most change in how they prepare their students for the AP Exam(s). Many teachers

commented that the APSI helped them understand recent changes in AP Exam expectations, and gave them ideas for preparing their students with the skills necessary to answer new item types. Many less-experienced teachers reported having a better understanding of the AP Program expectations, as measured by the exams, as well as how the tests are scored. As a result, they have made changes to their curricula in order to better prepare their students for the exam.

Change in the Non-AP Classroom

In addition to teaching Advanced Placement, 88.5 percent ($n = 561$) of respondents reported that they also teach non-AP courses. These teachers were directed to items designed to gather information regarding the extent of change in those classrooms due to participation in an APSI. A total of 558 teachers responded to these items. Teachers did report minor changes to the content emphases or priorities (mean = 2.8, mode = 3), homework expectations (mean = 2.4, mode = 1), and grading standards (mean = 2.3, mode = 1).

Overall, teachers reported much less extensive changes in the non-AP classroom than in the AP classroom. Several commented that the non-AP courses they teach are unrelated, or are not considered a part of the core academic curriculum, such as yearbook, journalism, and so on. Many of the teachers who reported changes in the non-AP classroom indicated that they are teaching pre-AP or honors courses, and are implementing changes as early as ninth grade in order to prepare students for the academic rigor of the AP curriculum. This can be reflected in the highest mean score for “changing content emphases and priorities.”

AP Culture

In addition to APSI impressions and changes made to both the AP and non-AP curricula, teachers were also asked to report on various general aspects of the AP program and exam in their schools, including the expectations on exam-taking for the students, as well as enrollment information and exam preparation. This section discusses the feedback and responses of the participating teachers on the AP culture in their schools.

AP Program Impressions

A total of 603 AP teachers responded to the questions regarding their opinions of and experiences in the AP program in their school and district. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with several statements, where “1” corresponds with “strongly disagree” and “5” is “strongly agree.” Mean ratings and the most common responses are listed in Table 5.

The two statements with which participants agreed most strongly were, “I encourage my students to take the AP Exam(s)” and “The AP curriculum is important to prepare my students for academic success in college.” “Strongly agree” was the most common response, and 96.5 percent and 94.4 percent indicated at least some agreement (“agree” or “strongly agree”), respectively. The high level of agreement with the latter statement indicates that teachers see value in the AP Program and its influence on students as they prepare for a collegiate curriculum.

Table 5. Teacher Impressions of the AP Program at School

	Mean	Mode ²
Students come into my AP course(s) prepared for the curriculum.	2.7	2
The right students are enrolled in my AP course(s).	3.0	4
The wrong students are enrolled in my AP course(s).	3.1	3
I encourage my students to take the AP Exam(s).	4.8	5
I have enough input in deciding what students are enrolled in AP courses.	2.6	2
Students are given adequate information about AP expectations before enrolling.	3.1	4
The AP curriculum is important to prepare my students for academic success in college.	4.6	5

2. Mode is included here to illustrate the skewed distribution of responses.

The item showing the weakest level of agreement, on average, was, “I have enough input in deciding what students are enrolled in AP courses,” with most teachers selecting 2, or “disagree,” and 52.4 percent indicating either “disagree” or “strongly disagree.” In the optional comments section, many teachers indicated that students were placed into AP courses by counselors or Coordinators, and teachers were not consulted about or fully aware of the process. Some detailed experiences with students who were unprepared and unmotivated to succeed in the AP curriculum, and the difficulties that they, the students, and the students’ parents experienced in moving to a more appropriate course. Some teachers who felt that students were generally prepared for the rigors of the AP curriculum cited vertical teaming and changes they made to pre-AP courses as effective tools in helping students enter the AP Program as skilled and prepared as possible.

Teachers seem to be divided on the topic of whether the right and/or wrong students are enrolled in their AP courses. In addition to the two items in Table 5 (“The right students are enrolled in my AP course(s)” and “The wrong students are enrolled in my AP course(s)”), teachers were asked to indicate whether the enrollment in their course(s) is too many, too few, or just right. Most (58.9 percent, $n = 354$) of the 601 respondents reported that the number of enrolled students was “just right,” while 21.5 percent ($n = 129$) indicated that there were too many students, and 19.6 percent ($n = 118$) reported that too few enrolled. This information, when combined with some teachers’ indication that the wrong students are enrolled in their classes, may be evidence that schools and districts may be approaching AP enrollment from different perspectives, and that teachers may feel alienated in this enrollment process.

In addition to the number of students enrolled in their AP course(s), teachers were also asked about AP Exam-taking behavior with the following three questions:

- What percentage of your AP students are expected to take the AP Exam?
- What percentage of your AP students actually take the AP Exam?
- What percentage of your AP students are expected to score a 3 or higher on the AP Exam?

Because many teachers entered raw number frequencies as opposed to percentages, frequencies of exact responses are not reportable. Of the teachers who responded to the first two items listed above ($n = 592$), 68.6 percent ($n = 406$) reported that all, or 100 percent, of the students who were expected to take the AP Exam actually took it. All respondents reported that at least 50 percent of the expected

test-taking students actually took the exam, and 94.9 percent ($n = 562$) reported that at least 90 percent sat for the exam. Many teachers indicated that they do not expect all of their AP students to take the exam. Issues such as these may warrant further investigation.

The most common response to the question of percentage of students expected to get a 3 or higher (the general score recommended as “passing” by the College Board) was 50 percent. Most teachers (43.0 percent, $n = 250$) expect 50–74 percent of their AP students to achieve a score of 3 or higher, and 11.7 percent ($n = 68$) expected 100 percent of their students to pass.

Preparing for AP Exams

Advanced Placement teachers were asked to comment on the methods they employ to prepare their students for AP Examinations. A total of 264 teachers responded to this optional section, with most indicating that they conduct extensive practice sessions, in which they simulate timing, item types, and grading scales to prepare students. The practice sessions are conducted during classroom sessions and sometimes after school and on weekends. Some teachers incorporate these practice opportunities into their own grading scheme and course curricula, while others include them in addition to their normal grading and testing methods. Teachers reported that they present students with essay item types throughout the course and encourage peer review and feedback among students. Teachers also reported using homework assignments as another means for preparing students for format and material on the exam. Most teachers indicated that they practice item-type (multiple-choice and essay) strategies throughout the school year, and conduct content review in the spring when it is closer to the test date.

Some teachers detailed teaching methods they incorporate into the AP curriculum in order to prepare students for the examination, including Socratic seminar methods, peer review, note-taking strategies, and skill development. Most teachers indicated that they use the materials provided by the College Board (released exams, practice materials, APSI materials), but some reported using other resources such as the Princeton Review, Kaplan, Barron’s, and various textbooks. One teacher described hiring an outside tutoring firm to conduct a 16-hour review workshop over a weekend to prepare students for their AP Exam.

Some teachers detailed much more extensive measures to prepare their students than others. This information indicates that some teachers may be more motivated or have

more resources at their disposal to encourage exam success than others. Some teachers incorporate exam-taking strategies as a large portion of the AP curriculum, while others openly state that the exam is not a focus of the course and that they do not emphasize test-taking strategies. This disparity among teachers' exam preparation and motivation may warrant further investigation to determine its impact on students' AP Exam achievement.

The Value and Influence of Advanced Placement®

Although both administrators and AP teachers indicated that not all students who enroll in an AP course take the exam (for whatever reason) or that not all are expected to pass the exams, the general feeling seems to be that the AP curriculum is an important proponent in preparing students for col-

lege academic success. As one AP administrator responded, "I think that it has enriched the curriculum and provided opportunities for nontraditional AP students. Many would not have attempted AP courses, unless more of their peers had the same opportunity. The courses [have] helped some to think about higher learning post-high school. Whether they pass the test or not, academically many have improved because of the increased workload."

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The College Board

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